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November 20, 2012

The Honourable Justice John Z. Vertes, Commissioner  
Health Services Preferential Access Inquiry  
104-1240 Kensington Rd N.W. Box 410,  
Calgary, Alberta T2N 3P7

Dear Justice Vertes:

I am writing to you to draw the Health Services Preferential Access Inquiry's (the Inquiry) attention to an individual that I think should be a person of interest to the Inquiry and a likely early witness.

You may or may not be aware of recent allegations that have emerged regarding contributions to the Progressive Conservative Association of Alberta and its constituency associations made by Alberta Health Services Vice President Lynn Redford while she was an executive with the former Calgary Health Region in 2005 to 2008.

A Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy request made on her expense files with Calgary Health Region appear to show that the Calgary Health Region reimbursed Ms. Redford for tickets to PC constituency association fundraisers and for PC Association Annual General Meetings. It has also been reported that the expenses disclosed appear to show Ms. Redford organizing a political fundraising barbeque and expensing part of the costs of that barbeque to the Calgary Health Region. The Official Opposition has requested the Chief Electoral Officer to investigate whether these expenses violated Alberta's electoral laws.

Regardless of their legality, these expenses quite clearly show that Ms. Redford, whose job title was often listed as Government Relations officer for the Calgary Health Region, was one of the principal liaisons between provincial politicians and the Calgary Health Region.

You may not be aware of an exchange in the Alberta Legislature from the afternoon of April 8<sup>th</sup> of 2009, when MLA Harry Chase commenting on legislation before the chamber raised a concern about whom to contact on healthcare access issues:

One of the concerns that I have brought up before and that occurs, if not on a daily basis, certainly on a weekly basis within my constituency is who you're going to report to. When a constituent comes to me with regard to a health-related problem ... I used to be able to address my concerns to a lady whose name, I believe, was Lynn Redford.

At that point Minister Ron Liepert responds:

**Mr. Liepert:** You still can.

The exchange proceeds as follows:

**Mr. Chase:** I'm pleased to hear from the minister that that local autonomy still exists because this was one of my concerns. Possibly the minister can pass on the name of the most recent contact so that I can inform my constituents. I'm pleased to hear that local authority and local autonomy.  
..

**Mr. Liepert:** Same one. Same one.

**Mr. Chase:** Oh. Okay. I'd heard that Lynn's position had changed, so I'm glad to hear that in this particular, limited experience I am wrong. I appreciate the hon. minister recognizing the talents of this lady. She is an absolutely wonderful front-line individual. We could call and within two hours we would get directed.

It is our understanding that one of the impetuses of the Health Services Preferential Access Inquiry were comments made on the public record by former Alberta Health Service's CEO Stephen Duckett to the effect that when he assumed the position of CEO he found that some politicians had preferential access to health care resources for themselves or their constituents. Dr. Duckett reported that he had ended such practices. He also reported that he ended the practice of Health executives attending partisan fundraisers.

Indeed it has been reported in the Media that Lynn Redford's political contributions and political expenses ceased shortly after Dr. Duckett assumed the CEO position at AHS. However, upon Dr. Duckett's departure from AHS, the new CEO Dr. Chris Eagle expensed tickets to a partisan political fundraiser. This expense claim, which Dr. Eagle has subsequently reimbursed to AHS, was authorized by Ms. Redford, among others.

It stands to reason that any senior health services "government relations" official would potentially have information for the Inquiry regarding the relationship between health executives and politicians. However, the juxtaposition of evidence of Ms. Redford's distinctly political role at Calgary Health Region and the exchange recorded in the Hansard debates is quite concerning.

These are the circumstances as we understand them:

- We have a judicial inquiry into whether there was preferential access to the health system by politicians and their designates.
- We have a senior executive with Calgary Health Region whose job expenses indicate that her job duties were of a political nature – indeed the evidence on the record suggests a highly partisan role.

- We have that same executive described in Hansard as the person that a politician would call to get “two hour” service.

We are of the opinion that these circumstances would make Lynn Redford a person of interest for the Health Services Preferential Access Inquiry. Indeed we think that she should be one of the first persons called to testify at the Inquiry.

We are also of the opinion that it would be useful to have the Inquiry interview all government relations officers from all the now defunct health boards and from AHS.

Albertans are very concerned with the allegation that our limited health resources were accessed preferentially by some members of the political class and their designates. It is in everyone's interest to get to the bottom of these issues and restore public confidence in the integrity of the health care system.

If further information is required please do not hesitate to contact my office. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Danielle Smith".

Danielle Smith, MLA  
Highwood  
Leader of the Official Opposition

Encs.